

XIV. Public Participation

MRCOG is committed to involving the public at each stage of the transportation planning process. Coordination with community members and their representatives on this Plan began as soon as work on the Plan was announced in November 2004. The MPO's Public Involvement Committee (PIC), stakeholders, and the general public were consulted and included in the development of this public participation plan, resulting in a multi-phased approach to public involvement in the development and changes to the MTP over the past two years.

Public participation was conducted in three phases: Phase I solicited transportation needs from the community and the formation of a set of goals for the Plan; Phase II included project proposal and evaluation, goals refinement, and review of the land-use and socioeconomic forecasts; and Phase III was dedicated to a review of and comment on the Draft Plan.

All presentations incorporated visualization techniques to maximize accessibility. For instance totals of spending were shown as pie charts, timelines for plan development were shown graphically, maps showed traffic congestion (present day as well as predicted future) as Level of Service (LOS) on particular road segments and as travel time contours to the largest employment centers in the region, growth and future land-use maps were taken from the Land Use Allocation Model (LAM), and alignments of projects being considered were overlaid on the present transportation network. Maps zooming in on areas of particular interest were also presented to the groups.

Staff committed from the beginning of MTP onward to working both within the MPO structure and a variety of community groups from the earliest stages of Plan development to its ultimate conclusion. Within the MPO structure the public participated through its representatives on the MTB and the PIC, an advisory committee formed specifically to inform the MTB of public opinion on transportation issues. PIC membership includes representatives from each of the City of Albuquerque Council districts as well as the other incorporated entities in the AMPA (See Appendix ____). It is worth noting that several public interest and advocacy groups including 1000 Friends of New Mexico, New Mexico Public Interest Group, and various other groups participate in the PIC. In addition to informing the MTB, the PIC serves as a conduit for information back to their coalitions of neighborhoods and other groups.

Advocacy group involvement on the PIC has created additional opportunities for staff to meet with and address the concerns of citizens. Before a public review draft was written, staff were invited to appear on a panel on regional transportation planning. Also on the panel was the vice-chair of the transportation policy board.

MPO Meetings Where the MTP Was Discussed

11/12/2004	Technical Coordinating Committee
11/18/2004	Metropolitan Transportation Board
1/13/2005	Public Involvement Committee
1/14/2005	Technical Coordinating Committee
1/27/2005	Metropolitan Transportation Board
3/11/2005	Technical Coordinating Committee
3/17/2005	Metropolitan Transportation Board
4/7/2005	Public Involvement Committee

4/8/2005	Technical Coordinating Committee
4/28/2005	Metropolitan Transportation Board
5/19/2005	Walking And Biking Advisory Group
6/10/2005	Technical Coordinating Committee
6/23/2005	Metropolitan Transportation Board
7/7/2005	Public Involvement Committee
9/9/2005	Technical Coordinating Committee
10/6/2005	Public Involvement Committee
7/14/2006	Technical Coordinating Committee
7/27/2006	Metropolitan Transportation Board
8/3/2006	Public Involvement Committee
9/8/2006	Technical Coordinating Committee
9/21/2006	Metropolitan Transportation Board
10/5/2006	Public Involvement Committee

PIC and MTB meetings are open to the public and are advertised in the local newspaper well in advance. In addition, meetings of the Transportation Coordinating Committee are also publicly advertised.

Public meetings are valuable conduits of public sentiment, but they offer to public only indirect forms of participation. MRCOG staff has found that getting on the agenda of regularly-scheduled community meetings yields more comment and brings community members less-inclined to attend into the planning process. Neighborhood association meetings have proven to be an especially fruitful venue for public comment since transportation issues are often at the forefront of discussion. In addition to neighborhood associations, staff has made itself available to any public group requesting to have their concerns heard.

Neighborhood Association and Community Group Meetings on the MTP

6/1/2005	Westside Confab, Coalition City of Albuquerque
6/15/2005	ABQ Dist 4 Coalition of Neighborhood Associations
8/3/2005	ABQ Dist 7 Coalition of Neighborhood Associations
8/4/2005	North Valley Coalition of Neighborhood Associations
9/28/2005	MTP Open House (Rio Rancho)
10/5/2005	Westside Coalition
11/2/2005	Westside Coalition
11/9/2005	ABQ Dist 6 Coalition of Neighborhood Associations
11/15/2005	South Valley / Southwest Mesa Coalitions of Neighborhood Associations

4/18/2006	League of Women Voters
4/19/2006	League of Women Voters
5/10/2006	District 6 Coalition of Neighborhood Associations
5/11/2006	South Valley Coalition of Neighborhood Associations
5/25/2006	District 8 Coalition of Neighborhood Associations
6/1/2006	North Valley Coalition
6/7/2006	Federation of University Neighborhoods
6/13/2006	League of Women Voters
6/21/2006	Dist 4 Coalition of Neighborhood Associations
6/29/2006	Rio Rancho Open House
7/5/2006	Westside Coalition of Neighborhood Associations
7/10/2006	South West Alliance of Neighbors
7/18/2006	Environmental Justice Groups
7/20/2006	Alameda Neighborhood Associations
9/11/2006	South West Alliance of Neighborhoods
9/13/2006	Society of Military Engineers
10/26/2006	Mountain View Neighborhood Associations
11/30/2006	NM State Transportation Commission
12/2/2006	Albuquerque Public Workshop
12/5/2006	Albuquerque Public Workshop
12/7/2006	Albuquerque Public Workshop
12/11/2006	Rio Rancho Public Workshop
12/12/2006	Los Lunas Public Workshop

1/16/07	Town of Bernalillo Public Workshop
3/15/07	East Mountain Coalition of Neighborhood Associations
4/5/07	Albuquerque Public meeting on the Public Review Draft of the 2030 MTP
4/10/07	Sandoval County Public meeting on the Public Review Draft of the 2030 MTP
4/18/07	Village of Los Lunas Public meeting on the Public Review Draft of the 2030 MTP
4/19/07	Earth Day celebration at Sandia National Laboratories

MTP development was publicized on the MRCOG website. Upcoming public meetings were announced, timelines published, and even the draft maps used for analysis were made available to the general public. An online comment form was provided to make public comment on the plan and the planning process simple and paper-free. Public Participation established its own web-page, containing links to upcoming events, comments received (with staff response), and the Public Involvement Procedures document which guided the Public Participation element of the MTP.

MPO Transportation Planning staff responded to all comments made by the public as they came in, by the same medium. Emailed comments were provided an email response, written comments a written response, and so forth. In addition, staff responded to all concerns brought up by the public where notes were taken of their concerns and suggestions. These comments and the response to them became themselves part of the public participation. By December 2006, audiences at the five MTP public workshops held in the AMPA (3 in Albuquerque, one each in the City of Rio Rancho and the Village of Los Lunas) could review what their peers (or they themselves) had suggested, and address how well staff responded to them. This document was also posted on the MPO website. Updates to public comment and staff response to the

Public workshops provided an opportunity for transportation planners to hear from the public their concerns; a great deal of attention was given to maximizing the visualization capability of the MPO through slides showing the growth of developed land area in the AMPA since the 1930's, large maps mounted on easels, and take-home versions of maps used in the creation of the MTP. Public had the opportunity to address each staff member on their specific element of the Plan, as well as make general comments and suggestions at the conclusion of each workshop's short introductory presentation.

Stakeholder Coordination

In addition to the many public meetings, MRCOG sought to receive input from a variety of stakeholders. Stakeholder meetings were less formal and more conversational in nature, due to the smaller number of people in attendance. However, notes were taken and every effort was made to incorporate stakeholder concerns into their respective elements of the Plan.

Land Use

The 2004 base and 2030 forecast land use and socioeconomic datasets are based on extensive input from a variety of stakeholders. Municipal officials and planners, Tribal

planners, school officials and the development community were consulted through a series of more than 50 meetings that were held over a year-long period. Participants were asked about existing land use, near term projects, and anticipated future development. Maps were brought to meetings and marked up with land use corrections, density increases, and recent construction not captured in the 2025 MTP. In addition, local opinion regarding potential growth in the long term was also gathered, as planners and developers were asked about their thoughts on attractive areas for future growth, commercial centers, redevelopment etc. This input was entered into MRCOG's land use model and prioritized in order of certainty (ie. corrections to existing uses and new completed projects were given the highest priority, current and near term developments were second, and long range plans were third). The land use model then used its internal allocation methodology to create a forecast land use scenario. Many of the same people were revisited with draft versions of the forecast for further feedback.

People with Disabilities

Contact was made with the State of New Mexico Public Health Department to find appropriate contacts to advocate for the needs of disabled with respect to transportation planning in the AMPA. An advocate for the disabled consulted early and regularly in MTP development through inclusion on MRCOG's Walking and Bicycling Advisory Group (WABAG). MRCOG staff is committed to continuing to encourage participation of disabled populations throughout the planning process.

Environment and Natural Resources

Before a Draft Plan was produced MRCOG staff met with representatives from various local natural resources agencies, including the US Forest Service, City of Albuquerque Open Space, the State Historic Preservation Office, and New Mexico Game & Fish. The Bureau of Land Management was contacted separately. One of the major wildlife concerns was the barrier to wildlife that I-40 presents to wildlife migration between the Sandia and Manzano mountains. The State Historic Preservation Office expressed concern that archeological sites west of the presently urbanized area tend to be richer closer to the Rio Puerco. As development between the Rio Grande and Rio Puerco increases, the likelihood of encountering disrupting these sites will also increase.

Security

Before the Draft Plan was produced MRCOG discussed the MTP with representatives of various security agencies. Some federal agencies declined to be mentioned by name but were able to provide contact information for other interested parties. US Department of Homeland Security was contacted via email and telephone. The Director of Emergency Services for the City of Albuquerque did meet with MRCOG staff and discuss the all-hazards plan for the region as well as the general needs of the security community.

Freight

Movement of freight and goods through the AMPA is a primary goal of the MTP. The New Mexico Trucking Association assembled a group of stakeholders including representatives from a variety of freight haulers (local, LTL, long-distance, hazardous materials, etc) to meet with MPO staff early in the MTP development process. The group were assembled and shown maps of projected growth and land use. Major concerns of the group assembled are road segments that prohibit truck traffic, and in particular river crossings and north-south routes on the west side of the Rio Grande. Freight haulers pointed out that oftentimes the lack of available truck routes increases the truck vehicle mileage traveled, contributing to congestion on the roads upon which they are allowed.

Moreover, the lack of available truck routes sometimes forces drivers to take routes through neighborhood streets. Freight haulers also expressed concern at design-level details such as the lack of cut outs on some arterials such as Tramway Rd. Because they cannot make left turns into the commercial developments they serve, trucks often drive on local roads to get to their destination.

Environmental Justice

In its transportation planning, MRCOG seriously considers the three basic principles of environmental justice

1. To insure public involvement of low-income and minority groups in decision making.
2. To prevent, minimize, or mitigate “disproportionately high and adverse” impacts of decisions on low-income and minority groups.
3. To insure that low-income and minority groups receive their fair share of benefits

Using technical analyses (see Section XIII) and coordination with environmental justice stakeholders, MRCOG has produced all relevant information for identifying strategies to help minimize, mitigate and/or avoid disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations.

In addition, representatives from local environmental justice advocacy groups were contacted early in the MTP development process. These groups supplied contact information for other groups, who were in turn contacted. MTP staff met with representatives of these groups and concerns were heard in the meeting. Representatives from these traditionally underserved populations were kept informed about subsequent public meetings.

Some projects included in this MTP by their scope and location will require especially careful environmental justice scrutiny. The commuter rail project, which will be adding stations in low-income areas over the next few years, will bring both the benefits and the costs of rail service into these areas. MRCOG will continue to work closely with stakeholders and project-sponsoring agencies to insure that the federal environmental justice requirements are met as projects are implemented.